DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 264 198 SP 026 765

AUTHOR Sinlarat, Paitoon
TITLE Collaboration between Higher Education and the Private Sector: The Case of Thailand.
PUB DATE Jul 85
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the World Assembly of the International Council on Education for Teaching (32nd, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, July 22-26, 1985).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Cooperation; *Education Work Relationship; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *School Business Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Thailand

ABSTRACT

Thailand's higher education institutions, once largely involved with the education and training of civil servants, have recently begun to seek collaboration with private sector institutions. This activity began when it was found that there was a limited number of government positions available, and increasing numbers of graduates needed to seek jobs in the private sector. Efforts at collaboration have had some problems due to the "ivory tower" concept, and because of the academic standards of university faculty members. However, many creative efforts to bring about innovative programs for cooperation among business, industry, and higher education have been successful. These activities have included: an educational development unit; a continuing education center; a specialized training center; an academic service center; and an academic network. The major difficulty in the collaborative efforts has been the differing objectives, expectations, and orientations of personnel from the university and from the private sector institutions. The report concludes that an exchange system, with educators taking part in private sector activities and with private sector personnel taking part in educational activities, will help to close the gap between the two areas. (CB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED264198

COLLABORATION BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR: THE CASE OF THAILAND

by

Paitoon Sinlarat, Ph. D.

Associate Professor of Higher Education and Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs, Faculty of Education

Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

ON THE PARALLEL PATH

If the collaboration between the higher education institutions and the private sector means that the higher education institutions, particularly universities, will try harder to reach the goal of the private sector and that the private sector will assist the higher education institutions to maintain their quality and to work efficiently, then this collaboration can be regarded as something new in Thailand. This collaboration has aroused great interest since last decade. For more than half a century after the establishment of the first university in 1917, the main duty of Thai higher education has been to produce undergraduates to work in governmental offices. They paid very little attention to what was happening outside the area of the Civil Service. Meanwhile, the private and non-governmental organizations were not much interested in the higher education institutions.

The reason for the parallel path between higher education and the private sector is not hard to explain. Thai higher education institutions were established in order to produce personnel for the Civil Service. For instance, Chulalongkorn University, which is the first university in Thailand, was formerly Civil Service School.[1] The curriculum was therefore arranged to produce undergraduates for the Civil Service, and the undergraduates actually worked in governmental offices. This happening was obviously seen

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

[1] Paitoon Sinlarat, "Development of Universities in Thailand," thesis for the Master Degree in Educational Administration, Chulalongkorn University, 1973, p. 32 (in Thai.)

SP 026 765

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

H. Leavitt

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

when Kasetsart University, the Medical School and Silpakorn University were established between 1942-1944 to produce personnel to work in the governmental departments of agriculture, medicine and fine arts.[1]

On the part of the private sector, there was no demand for persons who had particular qualifications and required particular training. It was therefore sufficient to use the people who had been trained in the Civil Service. Besides, the early business system was the family system that was operated by the members of the family who had been trained through apprenticeship. The growth of business that required persons with particular training has just really begun after World War II.

While the speed of the business growth was slackening, the Civil Service system was the great system which was prevailing in Thai society. Thai higher education institutions were operated by the Civil Service system and had their own financial system. Thus, the higher education is ~~a free~~ an independent system and it has no need to pay much attention to its surroundings whereas business had its own direction also.

THE FIRST COLLABORATION

In many countries, especially in industrial countries, the relation between the higher education institutions and the private sector tends to be chiefly financial collaboration. The money obtained from businesses and industries has been spent on operation many higher education institutions.

In Thailand financial matters are apparently not a primary issue. The principal issue is to produce undergraduates. Since Thailand launched the first economic development plan in 1961 in compliance with the guidance of the western economists, the higher education institutions, particularly undergraduates in certain fields such as engineering, agriculture, science and education because they are immediately essential to the development of the country. The majority of these undergraduates have helped the Civil Service to expand the country development. The others have worked in the

---

[1] Ibid, pp. 73 - 78.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

private organizations that were adapting themselves to keep up with modern businesses and industries which required a large number of undergraduates in new fields.

A decade later, the third development plan, especially the education development plan, emphasized on producing highly qualified persons in accordance with the demand of the country, particularly in the fields that are essential to the economic and social development. Nevertheless, the consequence of this plan (1972-1976) was that "Most present curriculums concerning the teaching-learning processes still remain theoretical with little training and also lack the real relation with real life in real society... Moreover, the other problem arose from changes in economic and social conditions during the second half of the development plan. These changes had an impact on the labour market. As a result, a lot of undergraduates in many fields were unemployed." [1] Beside other causes, the main cause of unemployment was that the system of education and teaching" was too specific because it aimed at producing personnel only for one market and one profession, namely the Civil Service. Thus, it could not change its role in producing government officials in order to keep up with the changing market."[2]

The problem of unemployment grew worse every year and reached its worst stage about 2-3 years ago when the Government restricted the increasing number of government officials. Consequently, few undergraduates could work for the Civil Service, and the number of the unemployed highly increased, especially in the fields of social sciences and teachers' training. When it came to this point, higher education and the private organizations decided to face and collaborate with each other. Universities in particular wanted to produce undergraduates to meet an increasing demand of the labour market, especially the labour in the private sector. On the part of the private sector, new

---

1 Higher Education Fourth Development Plan, (1972-1976). Ministry of University Affairs, Bangkok Thailand, p. 2 (in Thai).

2 Vuthitep Intapanya "Roles of Higher Education in Resolving the Problems of Graduate Unemployment," in Higher Education and Labour Market, Office of Academic Affaits, Ministry of University Affairs, Bangkok Thailand, p.93 (in Thai).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

personnel with new qualifications were needed to cope with changes in the modern system of businesses and industries.

ON THE SCATTERED PATHS

After the third development plan (1972-1976) had indicated that lots of undergraduates were unemployed, the fourth development plan (1977-1981) therfore emphasized on the improving and encouraging the production of undergraduates in the fields required by the market and essential to the country development. The successive fifth development plan (1982-1986) also concentrated on the same purpose to produce undergraduates to meet the demand of the labour market.

At the early stage, universities tried to improve curriculums, especially contents and essence and the teaching-learning processes, to be in accordance with the labour market in the private sector such as in businesses and industries Many faculties in the field of business, especially the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, and other faculties in the field of science and technology, particularly the Faculty of Engineering, have held conferences among themselves and with various businesses and industries now and then. There were also more attempts to provide students with professional internship in the private sector. For example, at Chulalongkorn University during 1977-1982, the Faculty of Engineering arranged more than ten meetings between the people who took charge of the curriculum and the non-professional people.

The private sector itself made a great effort to improve its own businesses with the help of new undergraduates. Many businesses set up their own training centres with the purpose to enable undergraduates to work according to their requirements. Many big businesses such as banks, and big companies such as Siam Motors and Esso have their own systems and training. On the other hand, a group of businessmen cooperated with each other in establishing their own higher education institutions that were developed into four wellknown private universities and one college, namely Payab University The University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, the Bangkok University, the Business Administration University and the Assumption Business Administration College.

Many businessmen were often invited to be lecturers in universities and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

colleges. This was very obvious in the past 4-5 years, especially in private universities that put an emphasis on business. More than half of the instructors were part-time lecturers. More individual instructors were invited to give lectures and discussions and to be consultants for companies and industrial factories. In the past 5-10 years, many of them were engaged in researches for various firms in order to promote marketing, to improve the quality of production and to reduce the costs by various means.

From the examples mentioned, it is clearly seen that the financial collaboration does not play a sufficiently important role except in case of the private universities that have already been operated by a group of businessmen.

AN EFFORT TO SET UP A SYSTEM

An effort to adapt themselves to be in compliance with necessity and social changes as mentioned can be regarded as natural adjustment of those institutions. Some time later, certain problems occurred. For example, there was no systematic data filing; some instructors taught in the private institutions according to their aptitudes and interests; other instructors spent too much time on part-time teaching and did not pay enough attention to their full-time work. These problems led to an effort to systematize the collaboration with the private sector. At present, this effort can be seen in various forms as follows:

1. Educational Development Unit. This unit has been set up to be responsible for following up educational movements in each field, collecting all teaching problems, following up undergraduates, using the data to improve the curriculums and teaching so that they will correspond with social changes, especially changes in business. Many units of this kind have been established at a university level such as Teaching-Learning Development Unit at Thammasart University, Chulalongkorn University, Khonkhan University, and some units at a faculty level such as Engineering Education Unit and Medical Education Unit. These units supervise, follow up and improve the curriculums and teaching to be more modern and appropriate.

2. Continuing Education Centre. The purpose of this centre is to provide business and the private sector with modern knowledge. The main task

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

focuses on arranging training and seminars. The centres of this kind, as well as the unit montioned earlier, were established at a university level such as at Chulalongkorn University, National Institute for Development Administration (NIDA) and Kasetsart University. There are also large projects at a faculty level, especially in the field of business in two wellknown universities, namely Chulalongkorn University and Thammasart University

3. Specialized Training Centre. This centre is a particular adjustment of Thai higher education institutions to meet the new demand of businesses and industries. When businesses and industries changed rapidly, higher education in a regular system could not keep up with them. Specialized training centres have been set up at a high level such as at a post diploma level or at a master's degree level. The case which has been operated successfully is GIBA (Graduate Institute for Business Administration) at Chulalongkorn University. This institute has obtained the collaboration from Northwestern University in United States. Other examples are the master's degree programme in economics taught in English and the Petro-Chemistry programme at Chulalongkorn University.

4. Academic Service Centre. This centre provides training in accordance with the continuing education programme. Furthermore, it is the centre that systematizes various kinds of services such as consultation, work system, researches and special programmes for businesses and industries. This systematization will enable instructors to provide services in an easier manner. Besides, businesses and industries can make use of those services in more explicit and direct manner.

This centre simultaneously has the direct relation with financial and academic matters because the services it provides earn a large amount of income for the university. Examples are the Consulting Unit of NIDA, and the other centre at Chulalongkorn University which have been established in 1977 and 1984 respectively.

5. The Non-Professional Board of Trustees. The university's board of trustees is a new system. Formerly, the board of trustees was composed of administrators, senior instructors and the Government's representatives. But according to a law recently issued, especially in case of Chulalongkorn University, some businessmen were invited to be members of the board of trustees. The private ~~sector~~ sector therefore had a chance to play a more significant

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

role in setting a goal and direction for universities.

6. Academic Network. This is an attempt to exchange data for education and researches between universities and the private sector. So far, the universities have mainly provided academic services. For example, Research Dissemination Project has been set up at Chulalongkorn University. However, the data from the private sector are insufficient.

7. Teachers for Society. This is the work of the teacher's training institutes. The production of teachers for governmental offices has faced a serious problem. Last year there were only 1,000 vacancies, but not less than 100,000 teachers applied for those positions. As a result, there were some efforts to set up wider curriculums to train teachers in specific fields such as businesses and industries. Besides, teachers' training institutions have tried to create the relation with the community and studied the data in order to develop the teaching profession until it can be applied in every career. This can be done by encouraging training in various offices and by cooperating with the private organization (NGO) to produce teachers for voluntary organizations. One good example is the collaboration between the Faculty of Education of Chulalongkorn University and the private organization (FECU-NGO).

DEPARTURE FROM THE IVORY TOWER

Even though Thai higher education have tried by applying various forms and means, their attempts have not been carried out so easily. The curriculum development to meet the demand of the labour market and social changes has been undertaken with some difficulties. In universities there are not many lecturers and researchers who are acceptable and can be of use to businesses and industries. For the university personnel, it is against their nature to acknowledge new changes in society and environments.

Consequently, though various groups at different levels have tried to create a collaboration between the higher education institutions and businesses and industries, they still faced the problem of academic tie. This academic tie narrowed the perception of the university personnel and imprisoned them in their own ivory tower, leaving them no chance to open their eyes to see the world and the society. The other problem was that some university personnel stuck to the international standard which does not have

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

a sufficient relation with Thai society. For these reasons, the private sector did not dare to cooperate with universities.

The cases in Thailand have indicated that the encouragement of the relation and collaboration between higher education and the private organizations requires first of all a change in the consciousness of the university personnel. The universitiy instructors have to get out of their ivory tower, and come down to earth. Then, the collaboration can begin. After that the process of exchanging systems, data, ideas, opinions and experiences will follow and then the demand of each party will be fulfilled. Eventually, it will be hopeful that education and society can be in harmony.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE